

**United States Environmental Protection Agency  
Criminal Investigation Division  
Investigative Activity Report**

**Case Number:**

0506-M723

**Case Title:**

Crego Lake

**Subject of Report:**

Rick Cortis Interview

**Reporting Office:**

Detroit, MI, Resident Office

**Activity Date:**

March 19, 2019

**Reporting Official and Date:**

[REDACTED]  
[REDACTED]

22-MAR-2019, [REDACTED]

**Approving Official and Date:**

[REDACTED]  
[REDACTED]  
22-MAR-2019, [REDACTED]  
[REDACTED]

**SYNOPSIS**

On 03/19/2019, [REDACTED] from the United States (U.S.) Environmental Protection Agency (EPA), along with [REDACTED] from the Federal Bureau of Investigation (FBI), interviewed complainant Rick Cortis about his complaint alleging the illegal disposal of asbestos. In addition to the interview, both SAs walked the property at 1099 E. Grand River Ave., Williamston, MI 48895 where asbestos was allegedly disposed of improperly.

**DETAILS**

On 03/19/2019, [REDACTED] from the United States (U.S.) Environmental Protection Agency (EPA), along with [REDACTED] from the Federal Bureau of Investigation (FBI), interviewed complainant Rick Cortis about his complaint alleging the illegal disposal of asbestos.

On 03/19/2019, prior to the interview, [REDACTED] went to the Williamston Police Department (WPD) for a criminal history check of the last name Cortis. The search by WPD came back with no hits. Williamston PD stated that the address for the complainant and the alleged site was patrolled by the Meridian Township Police Department (MTPD).

[REDACTED] then went to the MTPD to run a criminal history check on the last name Cortis. The search by MTPD came back with a sealed record from the police department at Michigan State University. In addition, there was a complaint filed with the MTPD against Mr. Cortis back in 2016. The individual claimed he/she had not seen or spoken to Mr. Cortis in nearly 2 years and out of nowhere Mr. Cortis was texting him/her to get past money owed. MTPD stated nothing further came of the complaint.

Continuing on 03/19/2019, [REDACTED] (U.S. EPA) and [REDACTED] (FBI) went to 1000 E. Grand River Ave., Williamston, MI 48895, a property owned by Mr. Cortis. Upon arrival at 1300 hours, Mr. Cortis greeted the Agents and provided his license for identification.

**COMPLAINANT:**

Richard (goes by Rick) Alexander Cortis

Address: [REDACTED]

Date of Birth: [REDACTED]

White Male,

Height: 6' 01"

Eyes: Brown

Michigan License: [REDACTED]

Issued: [REDACTED]

Expires [REDACTED]

While providing his MI license for identification, [REDACTED] noticed a badge of some type in the

This document contains neither recommendations nor conclusions of the EPA.  
It is the property of the EPA and is loaned to your agency;  
it and its contents are not to be distributed outside your agency.

**United States Environmental Protection Agency  
Criminal Investigation Division  
Investigative Activity Report**

**Case Number:**

0506-M723

complainant's wallet. The complainant stated that he was a licensed professional investigator. Mr. Cortis also stated that he used to work for the MTPD for a year as a patrol officer and for the Grosse Ile Police Department for approximately 2 years.

██████████ and ██████████ then followed Mr. Cortis over to Wallace Storage Center to look at the site while interviewing Mr. Cortis.

Wallace Storage Center is located at 1099 E. Grand River Ave., Williamston, MI 48895. Wallace Storage Center appeared to be no longer in business. There were only 2 vehicles out front, one of which was for an auction company. Mr. Cortis stated the property had been taken over by the probate courts and Wallace Storage Center was no longer in business.

Mr. Cortis stated that back in 2014 he was looking for a property to buy along Grand River Ave., in Williamston, MI so that he could open a used car dealership. Mr. Cortis stated that he worked out a deal with Tracy Wallace, the owner of Wallace Storage Center, that would provide Mr. Cortis 140 parking spots for his cars, under the condition that he got the necessary permit from the city, he paid \$100/month in rent and that he also cleaned up the property.

As part of the clean-up, Mr. Cortis stated that Tracy Wallace rented a dumpster and for multiple weeks he was at the site picking up garbage and throwing it in the dumpster. In addition, Mr. Cortis stated that he hauled several loads of waste to his property and disposed of it by burning it. During one clean-up session Mr. Cortis stated that his son and his son's friends were helping him. It was at this time that one of the son's friends noticed debris and said it looked like asbestos. Mr. Cortis stated that there were multiple broken panels, approximately 2 feet x 4 feet, that were crushed and had the same "debris" on them. Mr. Cortis stated that he took a sample home and tried to burn it, but that it would not burn. He then had the sample tested at Fibertec, which eventually came back positive for asbestos (See Attachment: Rick Cortis 2014 DEQ and Asbestos Report).

Unclear on the exact timeline (whether it was before or after submitting the test), Mr. Cortis stated that he also disposed of an unknown quantity of garbage, including similar asbestos panels, by putting it in a shallow hole that already existed on the property and then covered it with a little dirt, straw, and seed. Mr. Cortis provided a map of the property and marked the approximate area of the asbestos filled hole with an "X" in a circle (See Attachment: 1099 E. Grand River). The "X" is next to the area designated as, "Proposed Go-Minis Storage Area."

Around the same time, Mr. Cortis' request for a permit to open his used car dealership was denied. Mr. Cortis stated that he was no longer interested in the property because of the toxic environment and stated he made his concerns known to the city. Mr. Cortis then stated that the city and eventually the Michigan (MI) Department of Environmental Quality tried to pin the asbestos dumping on him.

**ATTACHMENT**

Rick Cortis 2014 DEQ and Asbestos Report.

1099 E. Grand River.